

COLL. CAT.

SENATE.....

.....No. 67.

DOCUMENTS

RELATING TO THE

MASSACHUSETTS CHARITABLE

EYE AND EAR INFIRMARY.

P E T I T I O N .

To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts :

The undersigned, in behalf of the Massachusetts Charitable Eye and Ear Infirmary, respectfully represent, that said institution was incorporated by the Legislature in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and twenty-seven—that since its commencement to the present time, it has, as your petitioners have reason to believe, been the means of accomplishing much good to the community, by gratuitous and successful treatment of diseases of the eye and ear. This charity was founded for the relief of the indigent and afflicted, it having been ascertained by careful observation, there existed much disease affecting the organs of sight and hearing, particularly the former, among the laboring classes of the community, whose limited means did not permit them to obtain medical advice and treatment in the ordinary way. It has hitherto been sustained entirely by the contributions of benevolent individuals; but the funds accruing from this source, though used with the greatest economy, have not proved adequate to the demands made upon them; and owing to this cause, many applicants from the country have been obliged to return home without relief. Your petitioners believe that this institution ought to be placed on a firmer foundation with respect to funds, than it has hitherto stood upon, and that it is every way worthy of the patronage of the Commonwealth.

They therefore pray your honorable body to grant it such pecuniary aid, as in your wisdom may seem proper, to enable it to accomplish the object for which it was founded.

ROBERT G. SHAW, *President.*

JOSEPH P. BRADLEE,
S. D. TOWNSEND,
HENRY UPHAM,
HENRY RICE,
HENRY EDWARDS,
JOHN JEFFRIES,
SAMUEL H. WALLEY, JR.
GEORGE HALLET,
WILLIAM W. STONE,
J. WILEY EDMANDS,
EDWARD REYNOLDS, JR.
GEORGE E. HEAD,
FRANCIS J. OLIVER,

Officers and Managers.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, Jan. 27, 1837.

Referred to the Committee on Public Charitable Institutions.

Sent up for concurrence.

L. S. CUSHING, *Clerk.*

IN SENATE, Jan. 27, 1837.

Concurred.

CHA'S. CALHOUN, *Clerk.*

The Committee appointed by the Managers of the Massachusetts Charitable Eye and Ear Infirmary, to bring the claims of this Institution before the Legislature of the Commonwealth, respectfully present to the Committee of the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives the following statement of the origin, history and present condition of the Institution under their charge :

A private charity, under the denomination of "The Boston Infirmary for the gratuitous treatment of the Diseases of the Eye and Ear," was commenced by the present surgeons in the latter part of the year 1824; from a conviction on their minds of its utility and importance, derived from what they had known of similar institutions in other countries, and from the amount of disease which they knew to exist in this place and its vicinity. They did not, however, feel authorized to appeal to the public for assistance before they were able to furnish sufficient facts to prove its necessity. They accordingly conducted it as a measure of experiment, at their own cost, for about sixteen months, when its importance seemed to be so fully shown by the amount of disease treated, and the success of their exertions, that in March, 1826, they thought it expedient to bring its claims to patronage before their friends.

A meeting was accordingly held at the Exchange Coffee House in Boston, at which the Hon. John Welles pre-

sided, where a report of cases was read by the surgeons, and such facts as had come before them were communicated. The gentlemen assembled were so impressed with a conviction of the usefulness and the importance of the institution, that it was determined by the meeting to give it a more perfect trial as a *public charity*. A subscription was accordingly commenced, and about two thousand dollars as a permanent fund, and about three hundred dollars in annual subscriptions was raised in support of the institution.

The number of cases in the first report of the surgeons was 856—at the annual meeting of the subscribers in March, 1827, the surgeons again reported the number of 654 cases. In February of that year, 1827, they were incorporated by the Legislature of this Commonwealth, under the title of the Massachusetts Charitable Eye and Ear Infirmary, with the requirement to hold their annual meeting on the last Thursday of October. From this period it has continued its unobtrusive progress in doing good, and its steady march into public estimation. But as from their situation the surgeons have been precluded from an opportunity of pleading its merits, this great and deserving charity has been slow in receiving the pecuniary aid to which its merits most fully entitle it; and it is presumed that it is not yet known and appreciated as it deserves. In November, 1828, in consequence of the interest excited by the report of the surgeons for that year, a meeting was held to promote the welfare of the Infirmary, at which a most respectable committee was appointed, “for the purpose of bringing the claims of the institution before the public.” This committee, after a full examination of the general and detailed operations of

the Infirmary, made a report for circulation, highly commendatory of the establishment.

From this report the undersigned beg leave to offer the following extracts, as fully evincing the necessity and benefit of the institution to the public.

“ An observation of the occurrences at the rooms and the perusal of the former reports of the surgeons, force upon our conviction the following facts :

1. *That diseases of the eyes are eminently the diseases of the poor*, and mostly of the industrious poor. Although a great portion of the applicants at the rooms are not absolutely paupers, it is apparent that many in our community may become subjects for a charity like this, if deprived, by any affection of the eyes, of the means of providing for their daily support. Of this class are journeymen mechanics, tradesmen, females of small income, and various individuals whose means make them independent while in health, but who are unable to provide relief when afflicted with these diseases. By the rich, complaints of the eyes meet with attention in their early stages. But by the poor they are neglected from necessity. And as the tendency of these diseases is to increase, a vast number of cases terminate, if not in blindness, at least in distressing complaints, preventing the use of the organ, which by an early attention, would have admitted of an easy cure. “ It has been stated,” says a report of the New York Eye Infirmary, “ by the medical attendant of the alms house at Bellevue, that a considerable number of paupers are annually received and supported there who have been reduced to the necessity of subsisting on the public bounty, by loss of sight, induced by diseases which might have been cured by attention in the first instance.” But it is not necessary to go abroad for support of this

fact. It appears that several cases have occurred, of relief of individuals who were confined in the houses for the poor in this city and the neighboring towns, who, but for this relief, would have continued to be inmates of the alms house. And it is found that there are, in almost every alms house, cases of incurable blindness, which, in an earlier stage, admitted of cure. Mechanics, by their occupations, are of necessity much exposed to injury of this tender organ, some of its diseases being almost confined to this important class of our citizens. And industrious females, who depend upon their exertions for daily support, are at once rendered destitute by the deprivation of sight, or by any such annoying or painful disease, as may deprive them of the use of that organ. So that the number of the community who may become subjects for charity, is very manifestly considerable.

2. *That Eye Infirmaries are the only places where the poor will apply for the relief of that organ in most of its diseases.* Previous to the establishment of eye infirmaries in Europe, and this country, there does not seem to have been any account of disease of these organs treated; although in every place where they have been founded, there have previously existed hospitals, dispensaries, and other places where treatment might have been sought. But to the Eye Infirmary they have always resorted without hesitation.

3. *That an infirmary is best calculated to afford means to acquire information, of these diseases, and to disseminate a knowledge of their treatment.* This is manifest from the great number of cases which apply to such an institution, comprising all the various diseases of these organs; and thus giving an opportunity for observation, and discrimination, which could not have been acquired

in the limited private practice of the surgeons. To the student of medicine also, it affords not only an opportunity for obtaining a knowledge of these diseases, but an ample field for illustrating principles, in surgery and medicine, which can no where be so well explained.

4. *That the public mind is not sufficiently apprized of the fact, that these diseases admit so generally of relief.* From the reports of the surgeons, it appears that seven eighths of the cases which they have treated have been cured or relieved; and it is probable that a much larger proportion could have been relieved, if they had all received medical aid in the commencement of the disease.

5. *That the amount of disease of these organs, is vastly greater than would have been anticipated.* The statement of the surgeons, which shows that more than 2,600 patients have already applied to this institution,* is sufficient evidence of this fact; especially when it is considered, that the institution has been very partially patronized, and even much embarrassed in its operations.

6. *That the amount of benefit conferred, is incalculably greater than the amount of means expended.* When it is considered how many have been cured, and relieved, and how little has been expended; it is apparent, that no institution of equal pecuniary ability, can vie with it in importance, or is capable of effecting an equal amount of good.

7. *That it has been conducive to public economy, by reducing the expenses of the city, for the support of the poor; and not only directly by releasing several from the*

* This was in 1828. The number of applicauts at this period, 1837, since the commencement of the Infirmary is 8,134.

alms-house, but indirectly by preventing many from seeking that last resort of the afflicted.

8. *That these diseases are, by their nature, of a character more deeply interesting than any which affect the human frame.* This might be shown by detailing cases which are continually occurring at the rooms. But as a few of these are noticed in the last report, (1828) of the surgeons, it will only be remarked, that this is made apparent from the facts that these are the diseases of those organs, which constitute a large proportion of the comfort and usefulness of man. Here, the disconsolate tenant of the poor-house, has been restored to cheerfulness and social life. Here children, born by the providence of God without sight, have by his blessing been brought to see and enjoy the works of nature, and the word of life. Here, many have been restored to the privilege of sabbath and weekly schools, and here in fine, very many, in almost hopeless blindness, or deaf, without any expectation of relief, have been restored to domestic comforts, social joys and civil and religious duties. These have in many cases, drawn forth the most eloquent and touching effusions of gratitude.

From the above we think it to be manifest, that this is a charity simple in its operations, and capable of effecting a great amount of good.

(Signed by)

EDWARD TUCKERMAN,
JOSEPH TUCKERMAN,
LYMAN BEECHER,
CHARLES LOWELL,
DANIEL SHARP,
EZRA S. GANNETT,
BENJAMIN D. GREENE,
WILLIAM B. REYNOLDS.

At the time of this report, the funded property of the infirmary was about \$2,700, and the annual subscriptions about 200. The forcible appeal of the committee was not immediately productive of assistance to the institution, but by its steady and successful efforts, in relieving the suffering poor, its popularity as an eleemosynary establishment, has so much increased, as to lead to the successful exertions of some of its friends to increase its funds. From private subscriptions, collected mostly by a gentleman, Mr. Joseph P. Bradlee, of this city, well known as the spirited patron and friend of every public improvement, the funded property of the institution amounted, in June of this year, to the sum of about 16,000 dollars. After this brief history of the Infirmary, the attention is solicited to an important feature in the institution, on which rests one of its strong claims for legislative bounty. It was early found by the surgeons, and the fact was always prominent in the remarks, which accompanied their annual reports of cases, that a large number of the applicants at the rooms came from a distance, without any means of support when in the city. Many of these, from their destitution, have been compelled to return, without treatment, to their respective houses in the country.

For the relief of such cases as were exigent, a small sum was allowed, by the managers, for the board of such patients, while under the care of the surgeons. But, as it was found that the small means of the institution, were inadequate to the relief of even the most pressing cases, without an infringement upon the funded property of the infirmary, the surgeons declined to avail themselves of this help, and preferred to look for assistance from their charitable friends. In this way, and from

this source, many have been supported, during the professional attendance of the surgeons. But it is apparent that this mode of relief could only be sufficient for cases of imperious necessity. It could not afford aid to the most of those who applied from abroad, and especially, it could not attract, and draw to the rooms, those who were suffering from diseases of the eye, in different parts of the Commonwealth.

The necessity of an establishment where all such destitute sufferers should be received from abroad, and where they should come under the immediate and constant inspection and care of the surgeons, has become each year more and more apparent. Among those who have been received, the surgeons have found that they had to contend against disease, aggravated by all the evils attendant upon poverty. Complaints, which would speedily yield to treatment in a comfortable apartment, would be continued by the exposure of the patient in a damp, smoky or otherwise unhealthy tenement. While in other cases curable disease has been continued, by the necessity under which the patient lay to labor, at least to such an extent as to defray the expense of board. The number of these cases, added to those from abroad, has forced upon the conviction of the managers, that they must no longer defer taking measures to provide a proper place for their reception and treatment. Accordingly, when the funds of the institution had reached the amount of about \$16,000, they felt authorized to purchase a building for the purposes of the infirmary. A favorable opportunity having occurred, to become possessed of a house, sufficiently large, and centrally situated, requiring but little alteration to make it perfectly suited to the wants of the case, the managers did purchase a building and premises, in Octo-

ber last ; trusting that they should be sustained in it by a benevolent public, ever ready to afford aid in a commendable enterprize. The situation of the infirmary, then, as respects the prospect of aiding, more fully and efficiently, the suffering poor, is this : An adequate place is provided, through the liberality of the private subscriptions of the citizens of Boston ; whatever is yet deficient, to defray fully the expense of this, the managers of the infirmary have no doubt will be drawn from the same benevolent fountain. But here the resources of the institution are limited ; and without further assistance, from some other source, the institution cannot extend its benefits. In this situation, the managers turn their eyes towards the legislative bodies of the Commonwealth, with the earnest request, that their claims may receive a patient attention, and with a confident expectation, that this deserving charity may receive the fostering aid of the State government.

The managers have been often urged, in their pressing necessities, to apply to the Legislature for aid ; but they have uniformly opposed the measure, until their claim should stand on that strong ground on which it now rests. They did not wish to ask for the means to purchase or erect a building, for the ornament, use or convenience of the city ; but when the city should have provided such an one, they felt assured, that the council of the Commonwealth would enable them to receive into its charitable walls, every child of suffering from abroad, whose case required its friendly aid.

As a charity, this institution is free from all objections so plausibly made against most of the establishments raised to offer aid in every kind of distress. It may be true, that to multiply charities is to increase pauperism ;

and to aid the suffering criminal is to patronize crime ; but this moral observation, if it be true to the full extent, cannot include the object of this charity. As has been remarked, the cases which have been presented for treatment, have been for the most part from among the *industrious* poor.

With these, a necessity to labor has, in most instances, promoted disease, until the suffering induced could no longer be endured, when relief has been solicited. It is not for a moment to be presumed that an individual, independent when in health, would expose himself to suffering and dependence, merely because he could obtain relief when thus afflicted ; much less, that he should be so enticed to this charity, as to cast away the blessing of sight to obtain its shelter or its aid. The diseases which it treats are the natural effects of the violation of the laws of the animal economy, and not the result of a violation of the laws of God or man. They are the acts of Providence, and not the fruits of immorality. They may, therefore, be pitied and relieved, by every statesman and philanthropist, without the fear of inducing to poverty or inviting to crime.

As a school for instruction in these diseases, this institution is deserving of liberal patronage. Before the establishment of eye infirmaries, this important class of diseases were too much neglected by men of science, and left to be treated, by self-styled oculists, by nostrums and specifics, from the erroneous notion that the common principles of pathology did not apply to the complaints of an organ of sense. But when these diseases were collected for observation, examined by science, and treated on well known principles, a most important change was effected for the relief of suffering humanity. They now

afford an ample field for study in pathology, not only as respects the affections of the eyes, but as furnishing, in an organ subject to visual observation, an illustration of the changes produced by disease in organs which are concealed from view. It is unnecessary to remark, that instruction can be much more perfectly rendered from cases which are constantly under the supervision and control of the physician, than in cases where the disease is influenced by extraneous and adventitious causes.

A much greater amount of benefit may be conferred upon those afflicted with these complaints, if they can be provided with a comfortable residence, under the strict care of the surgeons and attendants. Exposed in the cold, damp and cheerless apartments, often occupied by the poor, especially by those reduced from loss of sight, it is very difficult, and sometimes impossible, to bring to a favorable issue, what might be easily accomplished in a dry and healthy room, with judicious nursing and attendance. This is particularly the case after important surgical operations.

To enable the institution to receive those who apply for aid from abroad, and who are unable to provide comfortable apartments in the city, while receiving the aid of the surgeons, and to give a shelter to the destitute, who permanently or transiently reside here, while afflicted with the diseases of the eye and ear—to open a school for instruction in those important complaints—to aid the cause of science, by opening a new field for observation—and to promote the cause of charity, the managers of the infirmary respectfully request that the Legislature will afford them the means of opening and conducting the establishment which has been purchased, in such a manner as will best fulfil its benevolent designs.

A report of the surgeons of the infirmary, which accompanies this statement, will exhibit the fact, that the great proportion of the applicants are in the vigor of life, being of the age of between twenty and forty years; so that when restored to the enjoyment of sight, they may become for many years useful members of society. The number of males and females is about the same.

The number of applicants since the commencement of the institution was, in October last, 8154.

The number of towns in the Commonwealth from which patients have been received, during the five last years, is 153.

The following account, taken from the last five years, exhibits the fact, that the proportion of out of town patients has been each year increasing. It being in 1831-2 not quite one-fifth; in 1835-6 it was one-third of the whole number. This exhibits its increasing popularity abroad; notwithstanding the little aid afforded in providing board for those from out of town.

	Who's number of patients treated.	From Boston.	From oth- er towns in Mass.	From oth- er States	Whole number of those not from Boston.	
October, 1832,	666	539	108	19	127 = not quite	1-5
October, 1833,	778	565	170	43	213 =	5-18
October, 1834,	750	558	167	25	192 =	4-15
October, 1835,	721	507	181	33	214 =	2-7
October, 1836,	637	431	163	43	206 =	1-3
From 1831 to Oct. 1836,	3552	2600	789	163	952 = rather more than	1-4

In conclusion, the honorable the Committee of the Senate and House of Representatives are respectfully invited to attend at the house of the infirmary, and examine the character of the patients, the nature of the cases, the

benefit conferred, and such other circumstances as are to be learnt from a personal observation of the occurrences at the institution.

All which is most respectfully presented by

JOHN JEFFRIES,
S. D. TOWNSEND,
GEORGE E. HEAD,
HENRY UPHAM,
HENRY RICE.

WHOLE NUMBER OF CASES

ADMITTED TO THE EYE AND EAR INFIRMARY,

From October 30th, 1835 to October 20th, 1836.....637.

Number of patients affected with diseases of the eye,	513	Of these there were males,	263
" " "		" " " females,	251
Number of patients affected with diseases of the ear,	124	" " " females,	54
" " "		" " " males,	69

Ages of Males with diseases of the Eyes.

Under 10 years of age,	56
Between 10 and 20 years,	47
" 20 " 30 "	82
" 30 " 40 "	43
" 40 " 50 "	16
" 50 " 60 "	11
" 60 " 70 "	6
" 70 " 80 "	1
" 80 " 90 "	1

Ages of Females with diseases of the Eyes.

Under 10 years of age	54
Between 10 and 20 years,	50
" 20 " 30 "	64
" 30 " 40 "	37
" 40 " 50 "	27
" 50 " 60 "	10
" 60 " 70 "	6
" 70 " 80 "	3
" 80 " 90 "	

Ages of Males with diseases of the Ears.

Under 10 years of age,	13
Between 10 and 20 years,	18
" 20 " 30 "	13
" 30 " 40 "	9
" 40 " 50 "	6
" 50 " 60 "	2
" 60 " 70 "	6
" 70 " 80 "	2

Ages of Females with diseases of the Ears.

Under 10 years of age,	9
Between 10 and 20 years,	13
" 20 " 30 "	13
" 30 " 40 "	4
" 40 " 50 "	7
" 50 " 60 "	4
" 60 " 70 "	3
" 70 " 80 "	1

<i>Result of the Cases.</i>		<i>Result unknown,</i>	41
Recovered,	479	Not treated,	37
Relieved,	52	Under treatment,	28

List of the diseases and the number of each.

No. of Cases.	No. of Cases.
40 Amaurosis,	8 Lachrymal passage, obstruction of,
8 Amblyopic weakness,	6 Lachrymal passage, inflam. of,
27 Cornea, opacity of,	2 Lens, dislocation of,
3 " pustule of,	47 Lippitudo,
18 " ulcer of,	4 Lid, abscess of,
9 " foreign substance in,	15 " tumour of,
7 Corneitis,	2 " erysipelas of,
3 Ectropium,	2 " wound of,
2 Entropium,	1 " spasms of,
4 Epiphora,	87 Ophthalmia, acute,
2 Ecchymosis,	15 " chronic,
2 Eyeball, rupture of,	9 " purulent,
1 " wound of,	4 " of infants,
17 Cataract of one eye,	40 " strumous,
4 " of both eyes,	10 " rheumatic,
4 Fistula lachrymalis,	2 Ptosis,
3 Glaucoma,	4 Pterygium,
6 Granular lids,	2 Onyx,
3 Hordeolum,	17 Retina, morbid sensibility of
3 Hypopium,	4 Staphyloma,
4 Iris, prolapsus of,	2 Strabismus,
1 Iritis syphilitic,	37 Tinea Cilearis,
9 Iritis, simple,	1 Supercilium, wound of,

List of diseases of the Ear, and number of each.

No. of Cases.	No. of Cases.
18 Concha, obstruction of,	18 Ottitis,
10 " inflammation of,	19 Nervous deafness,
1 " abscess of,	10 Tinnitus Aurium,
3 Herpes Auris,	1 Polypus of the ear.
44 Otorrhœa,	

Places of Residence of Patients who applied at the Infirmary.

1	Abington,	4	Kennebunk, Me.
1	Amherst,	1	Lincoln,
1	Ashburnham,	2	Leominster,
1	Amherst N. H.,	6	Lynn,
2	Alden,	1	Lowell,
1	Amesbury,	1	Mount Desert, Me.
1	Athol,	1	Marlborough,
1	Albany, N. Y.	1	Middleton, N. H.
2	Bangor, Me.	1	Malden,
1	Bethuen,	3	Milton,
1	Bolton,	1	Munson,
1	Bedford, N. H.	5	Marblehead,
3	Brighton,	2	Marshpee,
431	Boston,	4	Medford,
1	Bristol, R. I.	1	Mason, N. H.
1	Braintree,	2	New Bedford,
1	Beverly,	1	New Boston, N. H.
2	Bedford,	1	New York,
1	Billerica,	1	Newton,
1	Boxborough,	1	New Brunswick,
1	Bergen, (Norway,)	1	Provincetown,
15	Charlestown,	4	Portsmouth, N. H.
39	Cambridge,	1	Perkinsville, Vt.
1	Carlisle,	1	Providence, R. I.
1	Calais, Me.	1	Portland, Me.
2	Cohassett,	3	Quincy,
3	Chatham,	1	Randolph,
1	Concord,	1	Rockingham, Vt.
1	Damariscotta,	16	Roxbury,
5	Dorchester,	1	Stow,
3	Dedham,	1	Scituate,
1	Dennis,	2	S. Reading,
1	Eastham,	2	Salem,
1	Exeter, N. H.	1	Scotland,
1	Eastport, Me.	2	Sherburne,
1	Foster, R. I.,	1	Sturbridge, N. H.
1	Foxborough,	1	Saugus,
1	Framingham,	1	Sandwich,
2	Gloucester,	2	Saco,
1	Grafton,	1	Southborough,
3	Gardiner, Me.	1	Truro,
1	Hamburg,	3	Tyngsborough,
2	Hopkinton,	1	Taunton,
1	Hollis, N. H.	1	Uxbridge,
1	Heath,	1	Vinal Haven, Me.
1	Halifax, N. S.	1	Waltham,
1	Harvard,	1	Waldoborough,

1 Wayland,	Whole number from Boston,	431
1 Woburn,	“ “ “ out of } town,	206
1 Wellfleet,		
1 Watertown,		
1 Weymouth,	Whole number,	637

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

IN SENATE, March 3, 1837.

The Joint Standing Committee on Public Charitable Institutions, to whom was committed the Petition of the "*Massachusetts Charitable Eye and Ear Infirmary*," have attended to the duty assigned them, and respectfully

REPORT:

That, in order to understand the true character and objects of this institution, located in the city of Boston, your committee have carefully examined the Infirmary and witnessed the method in which its general business operations are conducted. Next to the Asylum for the Blind, (if not even *above* that, and all others) its claims to public consideration and encouragement, are every where acknowledged. The groups of unfortunate beings of every age, from nursing infancy to threescore years and ten, seeking relief from partial or total blindness, is really astonishing. A great variety of diseases of the *eye*, which, if not skilfully treated by those who possess every possible advantage, derived from experience, from science, and from surgical conveniences, would utterly incapacitate the individual for all labor, are treated *gratuitously* at this infirmary—where the *blind* are made to *see*, the *deaf* to *hear*, if within the power of man to accomplish it—and the diseased eye, which, under ordinary

treatment, was hastening on to a worse, and even a perfectly hopeless condition, has here been readily and permanently relieved

Ophthalmic surgery is a distinct department of the medical profession, of the greatest benefit to mankind, and therefore deserving the sustaining influence of the Legislature.

It is not possible that, in miscellaneous practice, every physician and surgeon can be sufficiently conversant with the various maladies, to which the organs of vision are subject—to meet every difficulty—and operate with the success of one whose whole life has been devoted to one single branch of the healing art. It was said by the celebrated Baron Wenzell, an eminent European oculist, of great and deserved distinction, that "*he had spoiled a hat-full of eyes before he knew how to operate successfully.*"

It is presumed, therefore, that there is always danger, that more injury than benefit will be derived from any course of surgical treatment of this delicate organ, by one who is not frequently consulted, and who has not become perfectly familiar with its minute anatomical structure—its functions, and its morbid affections.

It has been with a view to creating the highest standard of human excellence, that governments have fostered institutions of learning—sustained medical schools, and liberally endowed hospitals. In a word, the system is universal in all civilized countries—and, under providence, has brought the art of operative surgery to such a standard of perfection, that no community could dispense with it, without feeling and realizing that an immense amount of suffering, disease and death, would inevitably be the result.

The Charitable Eye and Ear Infirmary asks for relief

and aid—not for itself—not for its officers, nor as a reward for services rendered—but for the *sick and indigent*, who seek its portals from all sections of the Commonwealth, as the last and only remaining place in which there is even a hope of relief. Were the feelings of *benevolence* entirely out of the question, and *philanthropy*, that best attribute of the heart, in no instance permitted to exercise its benign influences in the holy cause of relieving human misery, the principles of *economy* alone would justify the Commonwealth in making liberal appropriations for this most excellent charity. If the citizens of Massachusetts have manifested a perfect and ready willingness to support the *indigent blind*, till they have acquired a knowledge of some species of handicraft, by which they can maintain themselves honorably, comfortably and independently,—surely they will not, in this enlightened age, murmur at an expenditure which would essentially lessen the number of those who are liable to become *paupers from blindness*. There are many unhappy men, women and children, supported in alms-houses, on account of defective vision or total blindness, who might be wholly restored to sight, and who would consider it the summit of earthly felicity to be able to maintain themselves. But to many of this unhappy class, there seems to be no prospect of relief. They have no means of supporting themselves at the institution, when they arrive, until a deliberate investigation of their cases can be had, and the success of operations and treatment, fully and satisfactorily ascertained. Private benevolence cannot maintain the vast number of calls made by the poor and afflicted. Patients are continually arriving and departing—and each returning one spreads farther and wider the benefits and praises of this institution. The

effect has been to increase the patients till the cases are so numerous as to interfere with the private occupations of gentlemen who have been active in raising the infirmary to its present rank. No one of the surgeons receives any compensation whatever for services rendered to a claimant for surgical relief. All is *free*—all *gratuitous*. But the bright plans, the cheering hopes, the buoyant spirits of those who have been for years in total and unchanging darkness, are too frequently thrown back into despondency and eternal night in the midst of day, just for the want of the simple necessities of life, and a roof to shelter them until a cure can be completed.

Your Committee might adduce a great number of cases which came under their notice, while on a visit to the institution, to illustrate this fact. They will, however, notice but two: one, a lad of twelve years of age, the other, a child but one year old—both of whose parents reside out of the city, and both afflicted with diseases of the eyes, which would inevitably result in permanent total blindness, if not speedily attended to, but which are perfectly curable by proper and scientific treatment. But the parents are in such indigent circumstances, as to prevent their providing suitable accommodations for them in this city. They are, therefore, deprived of the benefits which they might receive from the institution, for no other reason, than that they are unable to furnish them a shelter and attendance for the short time required to effect their cure. These are named but as examples, of which a great number are daily occurring.

Although your Committee have embodied as many statistical and historical facts, illustrative of the usefulness and undeniable importance of this institution, as might be deemed necessary, (in a country, too, like ours, where

all are industrious but the maimed, and all are happy who seek for happiness in a rational manner, except the *blind* and *insane*,) yet they would urgently recommend the personal attention of the members of the Legislature to the daily concerns of this theatre of benevolence ; being assured that every gentleman will be strongly impressed with the justness of its claims to public assistance. With these views, your Committee ask leave to report the accompanying resolve. They have appended the historical statement of a committee of the infirmary to this Report, and as making a part of it.

All which is respectfully submitted.

By order of the Committee.

E. A. GREENWOOD.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

In the Year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Thirty-Seven.

R E S O L V E

On the Petition of the Massachusetts Charitable Eye and Ear Infirmary.

Resolved, That, for the reasons set forth in said petition, there be allowed and paid out of the treasury of this Commonwealth, the sum of five thousand dollars to the Massachusetts Charitable Eye and Ear Infirmary—and also to the same, the further sum of two thousand dollars per annum for the next succeeding five years, in aid of the charitable purposes of said institution, and that warrants be drawn accordingly.